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Executive Board of the
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REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Introduction

1. In 2004, UNFPA provided inputs to the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) for the preparation of a number of JIU reports and reviews, including on: a comparative study of the conditions of travel; implementing a common payroll system; measures to further enhance efficiency, coherence and quality of programming for development of the United Nations system at the country level; procurement practices; headquarters agreements; managing for results in the United Nations system; policies and practices of the United Nations system organizations towards the use of Open Source Software; and measures to strengthen United Nations system support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

2. Of the seven reports issued by JIU in 2004, including an overview and a three-part series of a report on managing for results in the United Nations system, five were of interest, in varying degrees, for UNFPA operations. UNFPA took note of the remaining two reports entitled Multilingualism and Access to Information: Case Study of the International Civil Aviation Organization and Review of Management and Administration in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As is the general practice, JIU reports received in the course of 2004 were shared with concerned UNFPA managers for their information and consideration. In addition, UNFPA had an opportunity to provide comments on the following draft JIU reports.

Review of the headquarters agreements concluded by the organizations of the United Nations

Scope

3. The purpose of this report was to identify areas where adjustments in headquarters agreements might be advisable, with a particular emphasis on those areas that are essential to the reform of human

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resources management, and to contribute to the elaboration of model rules for future headquarters agreements and, wherever possible, the amendment of existing agreements.

Comments by UNFPA

4. UNFPA was in general agreement with the recommendations, some of which could help organizations better attract and retain women (for example, securing work permits for spouses and the introduction of ways and means for spouses to seek employment in other United Nations agencies). UNFPA also sought to clarify for the JIU certain regulations concerning tax liability for staff subject to income tax, and informed JIU that as of 2002 UNFPA had instituted a work/life policy.

Procurement practices within the United Nations system

Scope

5. The objective of this report was to identify opportunities for increasing procurement efficiency and effectiveness in the United Nations system, especially through productivity enhancement, improved cooperation and coordination and technological innovations.

Comments by UNFPA

6. During its twenty-ninth meeting, the Inter-Agency Procurement Working Group (IAPWG), of which UNFPA is an active member, considered the JIU draft report on procurement practices. It prepared a coordinated response to the JIU on the report, which also reflected the views of UNFPA. Overall, the IAPWG was supportive of the scope of the report and the broad thrust of its recommendations. In particular, there was agreement on the identified need for greater efficiency and effectiveness in procurement. At the same time, the IAPWG concurred that further validation of fact and analysis was required in order for JIU to support its recommendations. The IAPWG strongly believed that with more complete information in hand about common procurement initiatives undertaken by the Geneva-based Joint Purchasing Unit, a number of the JIU recommendations would need to be modified.

7. There was widespread support for efforts that could be made to assist in measuring performance within an organization's procurement function as well as determining costs of procurement, thereby increasing efficiency and effectiveness. It was noted, however, that the analysis in the draft report on costing could not be supported, as the various elements of comparison were not the same among the organizations being compared. It was also found that recommendations related to the consolidation of procurement structures were premature, and that the report provided little factual basis in support of them. Moreover, significant progress had been made by the various organizations towards more collaborative procurement and common services arrangements as well as outsourcing of goods and services to organizations with the necessary expertise.

Managing for results in the United Nations system (Overview and Parts I, II and III)

Scope

8. The purpose of this report was to identify the factors that were critical to the successful implementation of results-based management, as a broad management strategy, in the organizations of the United Nations system and to provide a benchmarking framework for such an implementation.

Comments by UNFPA

9. UNFPA found this report to be an ambitious undertaking that offered useful insights into the practices and experiences of the various agencies. UNFPA took note of the suggested critical success factors reflected in the benchmarks, and observed that their achievement had been the basis for the Fund's many initiatives and continued efforts to institutionalize results-based management. While UNFPA provided a number of points of clarification and identified omissions in the draft report, it also gave detailed comments on the various chapters contained in the report. For instance, it advised that despite advances made to increase capacity to effectively monitor programme performance, the report had failed to acknowledge the number of challenges that organizations continued to face in their efforts to track and assess programme achievements. These included the lack of reliable and timely data that in turn hampered a more rigorous analysis of progress achieved and the establishment of definitive results. UNFPA also suggested that new partnerships and funding arrangements such as sector-wide approaches (SWAps) raised issues of attribution and accountability.

10. While the report raised the critical issue of harmonizing the implementation of results-based management in the United Nations system, it failed to adequately recognize the great strides made by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Executive Committee member agencies in reaching agreement on issues of simplification and harmonization -- the underlying objectives of which have been to ensure more effective development assistance, enhance national capacity and ownership, and reduce the reporting burden on partner countries. UNFPA informed the JIU that it had made key interventions in the development of results-based programme management tools within the UNDG simplification and harmonization initiatives and had drawn heavily from its experience in this process in revising its own policies and procedures for monitoring and evaluation.

11. Overall, UNFPA found the critical success factors for the delegation of authority for the management of human resources as identified by the JIU to be useful. It found that the defined benchmarks could be useful in assessing the Fund's human resource strategy and making adjustments as necessary. UNFPA also recommended including additional dimensions to the proposed benchmarks referring to the management of performance and contracts. It also suggested including additional benchmarks that made reference to the importance of integrating performance management into the larger context of a competency framework. Furthermore, UNFPA noted that performance management could not be undertaken in isolation from, for example, job design and human resource selection, all of which should be based on a common set of competencies.

Recommendation

12. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report DP/FPA/2005/7 (Part II).